

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

October 28, 2004

Intergovernmental Center, First Floor
10 Civic Center Plaza
Mankato, Minnesota

Route Permit Application
By Xcel Energy

For Proposed Double Circuit 115 Kilovolt and a Single Circuit 345 Kilovolt
High Voltage Transmission Lines
In Blue Earth County, Minnesota

EQB Docket No. 04-86-TR-XCEL

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) will hold a Public Hearing on an application by Xcel Energy for a Route Permit to construct three high voltage transmission lines (a Double Circuit 115 kilovolt line and a Single Circuit 345 kilovolt line) from the new Mankato Energy Center large electric power generating plant to the existing Xcel Wilmarth substation approximately 900 feet away. The public hearing will be held on Thursday, October 28, 2004, at the City Council Chambers, Intergovernmental Center in Mankato, Minnesota. The hearing will convene at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Alan Mitchell of the EQB staff will preside as the hearing examiner.

Description of Project. Xcel Energy proposes to construct a Single Circuit 345 kV transmission line and a Double Circuit 115 kV transmission line connecting the new 600 megawatt Mankato Energy Center gas-fired large to the Wilmarth Substation. The route will be approximately 1000 feet long. The new Mankato Energy Center will have a switchyard where the line will connect with the new facility. The Wilmarth Substation will be expanded to accommodate the new 345 kV and 115 kV lines.

Statutory Authority. Under the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes, Sections 116C.51-.69) a route permit from the EQB is required to construct a high voltage transmission line (HVTL). A HVTL is a conductor of electric energy and associated facilities designed for and capable of operating at a nominal voltage of 100 kilovolts or more. The EQB has adopted rules for the administration of high voltage transmission line permits (Minnesota Rules Chapter 4400). The EQB rules establish the requirements for submitting and processing a permit application.

Environmental Assessment. As part of the permitting process, the EQB prepares an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the project. On September 28, 2004, a public meeting was held by the EQB staff at the Mankato City Hall to discuss the project with interested persons and to solicit input into the scope of an Environmental Assessment to be prepared on the project. The Environmental Assessment will be completed by EQB staff by October 15, 2004, and will be available on the EQB webpage cited at the end of this notice.

Hearing Examiner. Mr. Alan Mitchell will preside at the hearing as the hearing examiner. The hearing examiner's role is to conduct the hearing and compile a record for the Environmental Quality Board to consider in reaching a final decision on the permit. The hearing examiner does not write a report and does not make a recommendation to the EQB Board. Mr. Mitchell's address is Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, 300 Centennial Bldg., 658 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55155, phone number (651) 296-3714.

EQB Project Manager. George Johnson of the EQB Power Plant Siting staff is the project manager. Mr. Johnson can be reached at the EQB offices in St. Paul, tel: (651) 296-2888, fax: 651-296-9535, e-mail: george.johnson@state.mn.us.

Public Advisor. The public advisor for this project is Larry Hartman of the EQB Power Plant Siting staff. Mr. Hartman can be reached at the EQB offices in St. Paul, tel. (612) 296-9535, e-mail: larry.hartman@state.mn.us. Mr. Hartman can be contacted with questions about the procedure being followed in this matter.

Hearing Procedure. This proceeding is being conducted under the alternative review procedures of Minnesota Statutes section 116C.575 and Minnesota Rules parts 4400.2000 to 4400.2900. This public hearing is less formal than the contested case hearings conducted by the Office of Administrative Hearings. By way of example, the procedures to be followed here do not require formal intervention by parties, or a prehearing conference, or prefilings of written testimony.

The purpose of the public hearing is to compile the record for the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board to consider in making a final decision on the permit request. The EQB staff will attend the hearing and make a brief presentation about the project and introduce into the record a number of documents relating to the project, including the application, the Environmental Assessment, and certain procedural documents. Representatives of the applicant (Xcel Energy) will be present to offer evidence and to answer questions. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions of EQB staff and XCEL representatives, to make statements, and to offer written comments and material into the record.

The record will remain open until November 12, 2004, at 4:00 p.m. to provide interested persons an opportunity to submit written comments to the hearing examiner. Upon closure of the public comment period, the hearing examiner will compile the record and transmit it to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board. The EQB will make a final decision on the permit at the November 18, 2004, Board meeting.

Project Information. Additional information on this project, including the application and the environmental assessment and the EQB's interim guidance, are available on the EQB's web page at:

<http://www.eqb.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=7819>